Santa Clara Valley
Water District

streamside planning

How the use of
alternative street designs
can preserve our
natural creeks and
hance streamside
velopments.

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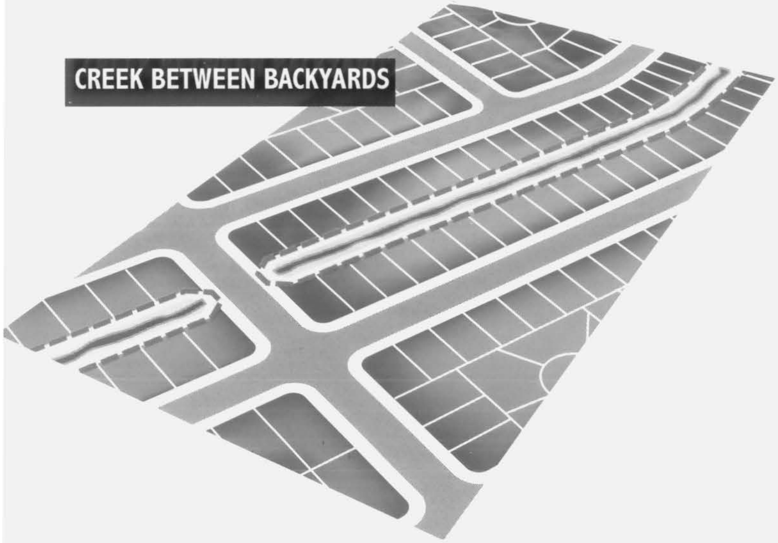
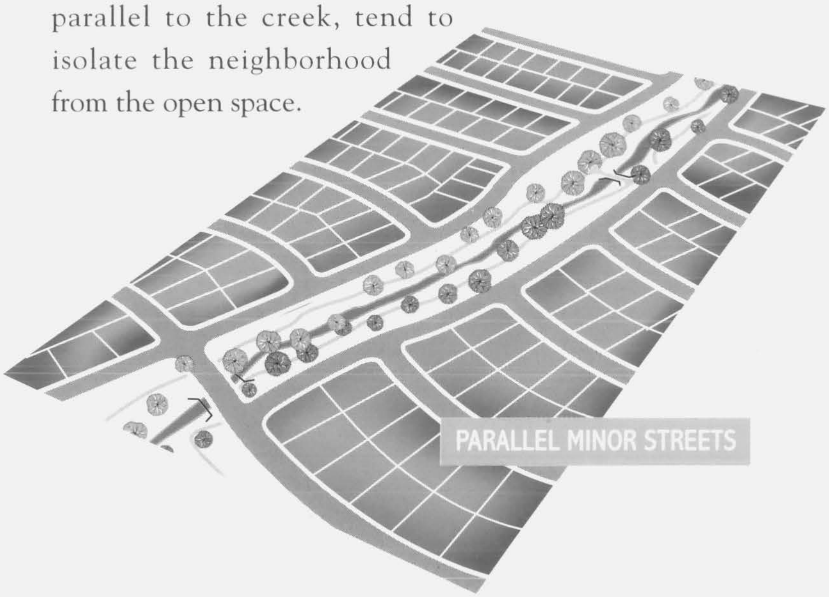
the problem:



Housing developments that are designed with the back fences along a creek bank isolate that waterway from the rest of the community instead of integrating it into the neighborhood. Such a design allows the creek to become a detriment to the area, instead of an asset. This type of plan tends to hide the creek from view, restricts access to it, and makes flood protection projects difficult to design.

the solutions:

Minor PARALLEL STREETS along a linear park or creek separates the park or trail from the residential area. These streets are most effective for maintaining access to the park or trail facility while reducing homeowner apprehension about living next to a park. Major thoroughfares, parallel to the creek, tend to isolate the neighborhood from the open space.



The creeks and rivers that helped form the picturesque Santa Clara Valley are an integral part of the natural beauty of the region. As the watershed management agency for the valley, one of the goals of the Santa Clara Valley Water District is to enhance our quality of life through preserving our creeks and rivers for the benefit of the community.

The district actively works with local jurisdictions, planners, engineers and developers of streamside developments to meet that goal. We work to preserve our natural creeks while at the same time providing recreational access for the community and privacy for those residents living next to our waterways.

Early land development in Santa Clara Valley often maximized lot yield by placing the back fences of individual lots directly onto creek banks. This restricted access to the creek, reduced the value of the open space to the community, and limited design options for flood protection measures. Consequently, the creeks were designed to be straight, smooth and efficient drainage ways, sometimes lined with concrete. These sterile waterways were often hidden from view, and

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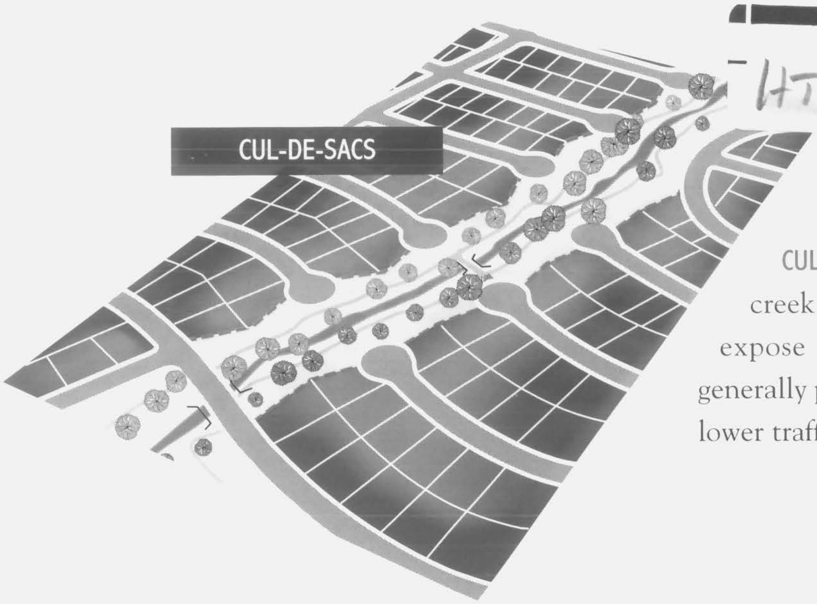

CUL-DE-SACS perpendicular to the linear park or creek also eliminate all rear yard exposure and expose two side yards per block. Homeowners generally prefer cul-de-sacs to loop streets, due to the lower traffic volume.

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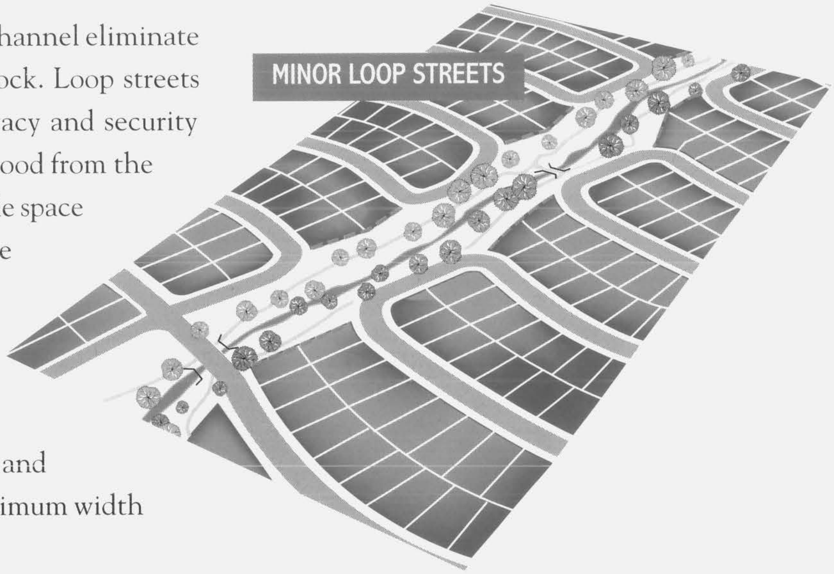
Minor **LOOP STREETS** perpendicular to the linear park or channel eliminate all rear yard exposure, but expose two side yards per block. Loop streets generally provide the best solution to homeowner privacy and security while avoiding a separation of the residential neighborhood from the open space in the case of linear parks. Loop streets provide space for public parking adjacent to the creek park chain while avoiding through-traffic otherwise created by a major thoroughfare.

Loop streets allow a more attractive development with regard to providing open space amenities than streets parallel to the open space. Visual and physical access is optimized. Loop streets also allow maximum width of residential area on both sides of the linear park.



hence became perfect corridors for illegal and disruptive activities.

It doesn't have to be that way.

Today, the community's desires for open space and recreational opportunities, combined with the district's preference for non-structural, natural flood protection methods, create the opportunity for streamside development which both preserves the natural values the public desires and provides the security and privacy residents need.

Our experience with public access to creek-oriented recreation areas points to the need to consider the perspective of the adjacent homeowners, in addition to the users of the parks and trails. Through years of working with development planners, we have identified three basic street alignment alternatives which can enhance the interface between homes and a linear creek park, trail facility or flood protection channel. These alignments are most effective where the major traffic is on the perimeter of the neighborhood, and residential areas are oriented inward to a central linear park, school or recreation facility.

Avoid the straight and narrow ...

Walk on the wild side!

Seize the opportunity to create a valuable asset to your development.

The Santa Clara Valley Water District has actively promoted these streamside design concepts for more than 20 years. These concepts have proven to be viable alternatives for developers. The environmental and aesthetic advantages are significant and contribute to both the overall quality of a development and the quality of life of the community.

For more information or assistance on designing neighborhood-enhancing creekside developments, please call us at (408) 265-2600 or write us:

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